





7
413

M 935

0.644

502

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
State of Indiana through the Indiana State Library

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.



By GEO. HICKS,
Late Major (Brevet Colonel) 96th Illinois, Vol. Infantry.

KINGSTON :

Printed at the Educational Supply Company, 16 King Street.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"The Essay on Abraham Lincoln, which appears in this holiday number of the *Gleaner*, has been contributed by Col. Hicks, formerly of the United States, but now a citizen of Jamaica. He writes from personal recollection of President Lincoln, and of the political and military struggle between the North and South, in which he bore a part."—*From the Kingston, Jamaica, Gleaner, January 1, 1879.*

PRINTED BY THE EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY COMPANY,

— : o : —

KINGSTON, JAMAICA.

Abraham Lincoln.

[NOTE.—For the facts stated in the following Essay, beyond what is matter of personal recollection, I am indebted to the following authorities: Story on the Constitution, Young's American Statesman, Mrs. Stowe's Men of our Time, and American Diplomatic Correspondence, 1865.]

Since the time of Washington and Franklin there has arisen no American so fully entitled to be numbered with them in the list of the world's great worthies as Abraham Lincoln. His is a name, not for "an age but for all time,"—not for one nation but for all peoples; and it is well to recall his memory and review his work, and consider those distinctive traits of character which made him the great man he was.

A man really is what he is; we can know him, chiefly, by what he does, and his manner of doing it. What Lincoln had to do was the righting of a great wrong—the saving of a great nation by the removal of a great evil that was destroying the nation. To understand his work it is necessary to understand the nature of this evil, the conditions of its existence, and the difficulties attending its removal. The brief historical outline which follows will, therefore, be of use. I can vouch for it as correct in the general, though many minor and qualifying particulars are of necessity omitted.

SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES.

In 1781 thirteen American colonies were united in a "Confederation." In every colony, excepting Massachusetts, slavery existed. Some of these colonies had immense territories in the Northwest which they ceded to the general government; and in 1787 the Ordinance

proposed by Mr. Jefferson, of Virginia, to exclude slavery forever from these territories, was passed, having received the entire southern vote. Soon after this the Constitution was adopted, to form "a more perfect union," and this Constitution contained a provision for the suppression of the African Slave trade. Through the action of their several State Legislatures the northern states were, in time, freed from slavery; and it was the general hope and expectation, entertained by the best and most eminent men of the South as well as of the North, that all the states would, by gradual steps, and without protracted delay, become wholly free. In the churches, at that time, slavery was generally tolerated only as a recognized evil, which must be put away.

But man's love of dominion over his fellow-man grows with its exercise; and the South made little effort to get rid of its "peculiar institution," while its disposition to do so grew less and less as the years went on. Then came Whitney's invention of the cotton-gin, opening to the South new sources of vast wealth by means of slave labour—an invention resulting in the increase of cotton production from half a million pounds to forty million pounds annually. A very perceptible change of tone with regard to slavery was soon noted, especially in the southern pulpit. Ministers began to find Biblical authority for it, and the people were not loath to accept it as a divine and very benevo-

lent arrangement. When more territory was acquired, the South gained the first of many political victories; for while slavery was, indeed, prohibited north of a certain line, the portion south of that line was left without restrictive conditions, and of that the slaveholders took possession. It should be mentioned here that at an early period in the history of the nation South Carolina, the most aggressively proslavery of the southern states, proclaimed the doctrine that each State, whenever it deemed its rights violated, could, at will, withdraw from the Union, and set up an independent government of its own. In 1832 South Carolina made bold to defy the general government and to treat the national laws as "null and void." At that time, however, she had only the partial sympathy of the South, and her "nullification" movement failed.

Throughout the South there was a growing sense of the desirableness of slavery, a disposition to justify it rather than apologize for its existence, an intolerance of all local opposition, and an increasing irritability at any outside criticism, whether emanating from New England or Old England. In the North there was a marked division of public sentiment. The commercial interests of the North were becoming more and more closely connected with the institution of slavery; and in commercial circles the received creed was, "Cotton is King." While many in the North had a deepening conviction that slavery was iniquitous and dangerous to the commonwealth, and were resolved to agitate against it, there was also, on the part of a large proportion of the northern people, a desire and determination to suppress all discussion of the subject, as needlessly and uselessly irritating to their southern

brethren.* The agitation however, was not suppressed and was intensest in the churches, resulting in dividing asunder the leading church organizations—each having its northern and southern section.

Meantime, the overflow of the populations of Europe was pouring into America, and the young nation, which Burke declared to be "still in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bones of manhood," was making marvellous and unprecedented growth,—very much greater, however, in the North than in the South. At this time the Slave States and Free States in the Union were equal in number, and it became a cherished axiom in the South that this equilibrium must be preserved. But the tide of emigration, flowing steadily in one direction, instinctively avoiding the Slave States, soon gave the North a decided preponderance in population, and the territories of the Northwest, rapidly filling up, were adding new and free States to the national constellation. This unequal growth was balanced for a time by the purchase and annexation of territory on the southern border, wherein slavery was already established, thereby adding Louisiana, Florida and Texas to the number of Slave States. But the steady growth of the North continued, and the equilibrium could not be maintained. In 1850 California was admitted into the Union as a free State, after a most prolonged and vehement contest, in the course of which many fears were expressed in the North, and many threats uttered in the South, of a dissolution of the Union,—for by this time the South

*One of my earliest political recollections is that of a meeting convened in one of the northernmost States, to hear a Reverend gentleman lecture upon American Slavery, which meeting was violently dispersed by a mob of rowdies, the local peace officers refusing to interfere.

Carolina nullification doctrines were largely adopted by southern statesmen. All along, since 1820, the slavery question had been continually cropping up in Congress, causing exciting controversies; but in 1850 the battle raged more fiercely than ever before. The South strenuously resisted the admission of another free State, unless she received some equivalent; and she finally accepted a most unrighteous and odious Fugitive Slave Law as such equivalent.

The "compromise of 1850" was accepted by the two great political parties—Democratic and Whig—as a "finality," not without protest, however, from the Anti-Slavery section of the Whig party. Previous to this, a portion of the Democratic party, in the northern states, had separated from it, and were known as Free-Soilers. From '50 to '54 the odious features of the Fugitive Slave Law, the disturbances arising from attempts to enforce the law in Boston and Cincinnati, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and other incidents, served to keep the question of slavery before the people of the North as the dominant topic of discussion. In 1854, the slavery question, "finally settled" in 1850, was re-opened in Congress by Senator Douglas of Illinois, who offered to the South the removal from the national territories of all anti-slavery restrictions. Under the Constitution, as it then was, (not as it now is) each State could determine for itself the question of slavery within its own limits; and the proposal was to give the people of each territory the same power. This measure was "the beginning of the end." All preceding contests were mild and placid compared with that which now convulsed the nation. There was a general re-adjustment of political parties. The northern wing of the Whig party disbanded, and

its southern wing kept up but a feeble, straggling organization. In the North, three fourths or more of the ex-Whigs united with the Free-Soilers and about one third of the Democratic party to form the Republican party, based upon the principle of opposing the extension of slavery. The Democratic party retained its name, and a majority of its membership in the North, gathering to itself the remnant of the Whig party, and in the South had everything pretty much its own way.

Douglas succeeded in his measure. The Congressional restrictions were removed, and it was to be left with those who should become residents of the national territories to determine whether or no slavery should be tolerated therein. The northern people immediately organized societies to send emigrants to the territories, in order that by their vote the introduction of slavery might be prevented; and the southern people organized societies to send thither emigrants with their slaves to introduce and establish slavery. When these northern and southern emigrants met in the territories, violent collision and bloodshed was the natural result. The South found that the free state men in the territories would carry the day; and then she took that step in advance which proved the downfall of slavery. The southern people had been educated, by pulpit, press, and platform, into the very acceptable belief (coinciding, as it did, with their wishes and their pecuniary interests in human chattels, valued at four thousand millions of dollars) that slavery was in itself right and beneficent; and they now demanded that slavery should be admitted as of right and protected in every national territory, and they declared that any legislation, national or territorial, treating slavery as a wrong, and seeking to restrain it, would be an

infringement upon their rights as citizens; and they also declared that whenever there was such infringement, the ties binding them to the Union would be dissolved. This advanced position of the South, together with John Brown's effort to end slavery at once by arousing the southern slaves to strike for their own freedom, added fresh fuel to a fire that was already at white heat. Douglas and his followers refused to accede to the southern demand, and, in consequence, in the eventful Presidential election of 1860, the Democratic party was split in twain upon this issue.

In that election three propositions for disposing of the slavery question were submitted to the people:—1. National protection of slavery in the territories; 2. National indifference to slavery in the territories; 3. National prohibition of slavery in the territories. The South proposed the first, the northern wing of the Democratic party the second, and the Republican party the third. For its standard-bearer upon this issue, and its candidate for the office of President, the Republican party fixed its choice upon

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

It has been rather the fashion to speak of Lincoln as though he were a "happy accident,"—one who, by the merest fortuitous chance, happened to be chosen by the people as their President, and then, unaccountably to everybody, proved himself to be fitted for a post in which almost any other man would have failed. Some English newspapers spoke of him as a man who "for the most part of his life had followed manual employments." The *Revue des Deux Mondes* said: "Mr. Lincoln was not one of those men who bring to the power with which they are invested a force and brilliancy acquired beforehand." And the *Paris Siecle*:

"What was Lincoln before the suffrages of his fellow citizens placed him at the head of the Republic? A mechanic. Charged with the government of one of the greatest nations in the world, in a crisis the most terrible in its history, the ex-mechanic showed himself equal to the situation." But any transatlantic misconception or half-conception of him is wholly excusable when we remember that in New York City a leading member of the Athenæum Club, who sought to do honor to Lincoln's memory eulogized him as "this untried lawyer of a western village." It is a tempting way of excusing one's own littleness to ascribe the greatness of others to chance. We are all charmed (and harmed) by the fairy tales, where some rustic young hero, without special preparation or any training, by sheer good luck and the favouring genius of some kind fairy, surmounts all difficulties, subdues all foes, and overthrows in combat the ablest and most experienced veterans. In real life these things don't happen. I grant you, the revelation of greatness may be the matter of a moment; but greatness is attained only by long-continued, persistent, laborious effort. We shall quite miss the lesson of Lincoln's life if we fall into the delusion that he had not, by education, by training, by discipline, fairly fitted himself for the task he had to perform.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

Lincoln was educated. What is the test of education? "We have," says Pascal, "three principal objects in the study of truth,—one to discover it when we see it, another to demonstrate it when we possess it, and the third and last to discriminate it from the false when we examine it." By what means soever a man reaches the result, he has an educated mind if he has obtained this power of vision, power of demon-

stration, and power of discrimination. If devoting the choicest years of one's boyhood to the making of Latin verses educates a man to this, well and good; yet only shallow-pated fools will insist that a course of Latin verse-making is the only means whereby one may become thus educated. Pre-eminently Lincoln did possess the power of vision—seeing clearly (not accidentally stumbling into) the true course to pursue; power of demonstration—causing others to see the same thing, (making due allowance for moral strabismus and color-blindness); and power of discrimination—with rarest sagacity avoiding being misled by the glare of any false lights.

Lincoln entered upon the Presidency an educated man. His mother taught him to read and write. He had six months' schooling. While he was a young man he read the best books. There are two books in the world—the Bible and Shakespeare. With these he was something more than familiar; he could repeat large portions of Shakespeare, and the Bible became so ingrained in his mind that its influence can be traced in every one of his speeches and state papers. Besides these two books, what is a third? If Luther answer for us, it will be that book which was a special favourite with Lincoln—Æsop's Fables; for Luther ranked Æsop next to the Bible. For a fourth book we have, by common consent, Plutarch's Lives. In lieu thereof, and serving much the same purpose, Lincoln read the Life of Washington—a book frequently mentioned by him as having greatly influenced his own life. He had also the Life of Franklin and the Life of Henry Clay, the favourite political leader of his early manhood. These six books, together with the best extant commentary on the Bible—the Pilgrim's Pro-

gress—he read over and over again, and he was a diligent student of the universal book of all Americans,—the newspaper of the day. One might have sought far and long before finding material which would have better served in laying a foundation for Lincoln's education. The Bible gave him his moral creed—the Golden Rule—and largely contributed to form his style of speech; Shakespeare enlarged his views of life and humanity; from Æsop and Pilgrim's Progress he learned the rare secret of making the greatest truths plain to the simplest minds; the lives of Washington, Franklin and Clay gave inspiration and hope, stimulus to self-exertion, and faith in the possibilities of his own powers; and the newspapers of all sections and all shades of opinion (for he read all) put him in close sympathy with his own age and country, and made him familiarly acquainted with the conflicting interests, passions, prejudices, hopes and aims of the people who were to be his helpers or antagonists in life's battle.

Lincoln was born into the ranks of workingmen. For his first score of years he had a workingman's experience,—swinging the woodman's axe, ploughing the prairies, boating on the Mississippi,—an experience not without value in contributing its share in the training that fitted him to guide the destinies of a nation whose ruling classes consisted, chiefly of workingmen. When the surveyor of his county fell sick, he applied to Lincoln to carry on his work. Lincoln took his tools and his books, mastered his craft, and did the work. In the time of the Black Hawk Indian war Lincoln volunteered with others to form a company of soldiers, and they chose him to be their Captain. He studied law. He became a "village lawyer," but soon

was in request beyond his village limits, and when that new State of Illinois had grown to be the fourth State in the Union, Lincoln had grown to be the first lawyer in the State. He was twenty-five years of age when his neighbours sent him to the State Legislature, and he was kept there as long as he would consent to serve them. This gave him eight years' experience as a legislator, and established his position as the recognised political leader of his party in Illinois. Four years thereafter he was sent to Washington, serving as member of Congress for the term of two years, when he declined re-election.

His legislative experience in the State and National Capitals was, doubtless, of much importance in the training which prepared him for the great work of his life; but of considerably less importance than his unofficial work, where he came in direct political contact with the people. The battle of freedom had to be won in the hearts of the people before it could be won in legislative hall or on the crimson field of war: and in no State was the political battle waged more strenuously than in his own State of Illinois. Vermont, far to the northward, and South Carolina, far to the southward, were States wherein political feeling was as intense as elsewhere, but there was no exciting discussion. In Vermont the opponents of slavery, and in South Carolina the advocates of slavery, had things all their own way. Illinois was a border State; in the upper portion the New England element predominated, in the lower portion the Southern element, and in the middle portion the two elements were about equally distributed. Nowhere did the contest against slavery produce greater excitement or fiercer discussion. From 1854, for six years,

throughout the State, agitation was universal; for even the few who did not agitate for or against slavery, agitated against agitation.

It was a time of political ferment and turmoil, the disintegration of old political parties and the attempt to harmonize heterogeneous elements in new combinations. It was a time of intense feeling and feverish excitement, with not a little of untempered zeal, while a multitude of counsellors were filling the air with their Babel of confusing voices. It was a time that called for the exercise of those same qualities which enabled Lincoln to lead the people successfully through all the distracting years of war; and his cool head, clear vision, conciliatory manner, firmness for the right, and wise selection of practicable means for maintaining the right, were largely instrumental in harmonizing discordant elements and bringing order out of chaos. It was his to curb the impatient, to restrain the extravagant and visionary, to tone down excess of zeal, to convince the doubtful, to encourage the fearful, to embolden the timid, to find what would attract and unite all and repel none. He saw clearly the one principle of right upon which all must stand to make success worth striving for, and the one practicable measure of state policy upon which all must unite to make success possible. He would not, for the sake of success, compromise away what was vital and essential; nor would he, to gratify excited feeling, burden his cause with what was untimely, unnecessary, or overwrought. The service he rendered the cause of freedom at this juncture was of the highest value; for, first of all, it was needful that the people should have clearly defined to them what was essential and what was practicable. This seemingly simple service required rare

ability. So rare is such power that Plato says, "He who can properly define and divide is to be considered a god." The ability Lincoln here manifested was not of sudden acquisition. All through life, as Lawyer and as Statesman, he had rigidly schooled himself until he had acquired the power—so very seldom seen—of stating his own case without overstating it, and without understating that of his adversary.

In Northern Illinois, where the Anti-Slavery feeling was most fervid, the people were accustomed to gather in monster mass meetings, by the fifty or hundred thousand, and with their processions, their music and flags and banners, to make grand political demonstrations. On such occasions they desired of a speaker nothing but that he should partake of and minister to the excitement of the people, and be but an eloquent echo of their own feelings. Few men could withstand the excitation of such a scene and the impulse to say what would be most acceptable to the multitude. In his "English Note-Books" Hawthorne has told us how almost impossible it is not to yield to the influence of the moment, and say what the audience desire to have said, in order to "produce an effect on the instant;" and he does not "quite see how an honest man can be a good orator." Of all the prominent Anti-Slavery leaders in the North, Lincoln seems to have been the only one who was not, at some time or other, borne off his legs by his enthusiastic audience, and betrayed into foolish and extravagant declarations. It is true of Lincoln—of how few men is it true?—that he did not go in speech where he had not already gone in thought. This would have marked him for a superior man anywhere, at any time; especially so, therefore at a time when there were vociferating mul-

titudes of men of that class who "think too little and talk too much." At these immense popular demonstrations, where the most exaggerated expression was apt to receive the loudest applause, Lincoln's utterances, somehow, seemed tame and disappointing. There was a certain craving for sensational statement and for unqualified denunciation of all opponents; and Lincoln had nothing of the sort to give them. But when he met the people in their town halls, and would have before him a thousand auditors in a mood to listen calmly, he would quietly talk over the state of the nation with them, and present his points in that plain, self-evident way which, while not unduly exciting the feelings, would thoroughly convince the judgment. His political speeches were the most persuasive I ever heard. He was one of the few men whose speeches made votes. "How forcible are right words," was the mental comment while listening to him.

Lincoln verifies the German saying, that "clear thinking makes clear speaking." His manner of speech is most admirable. It is a trial to one's temper to find many good-natured, weak-sighted critics apologizing for Lincoln's style. Let them note the fact—for it is noteworthy and it is a fact—that this man of the West, finding for himself such means and methods of culture as he could, had formed a style remarkably akin to that of Emerson, the man of highest culture in the East—*facile princeps* among the literary men of America. The style of each is plain, simple, direct, devoid of ornament, the force of what is uttered depending upon the thought itself and not upon any artificial collocation of sonorous polysyllables. Both exemplify the fact that the weightiest thoughts are best expressed in simplest words. Those who insist upon the special force

of the short Saxon words of the language may cite many illustrations from Lincoln. One of his most powerful speeches was that at Springfield, opening the important contest of 1858; and it abounds in terse, short Saxon words. It opens: "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending we could better judge what to do and how to do it." Lincoln adds: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe the government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the farther spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South." After setting forth "what to do and how to do it" he concludes: "The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail; if we stand firm we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate, or mistakes delay it, but sooner or later the victory is sure to come." Elsewhere he says of slavery: "Because we think it wrong we propose a course of policy that shall deal with it as a wrong. We deal with it as with any other wrong, in so far as we can prevent its growing any larger, and so deal with it that in the run of time there may be some promise of an end to it." Selden's aphorism, "Syllables govern the world," will occur to the reader of Lincoln. One cannot fail to notice how large a proportion of one-syllabled words are found in his most memorable utterances,—such as his Springfield speech; his letter to Greeley; his second Inaugural—(declared by the Westminster Review to be the most remarkable State paper known to his-

tory); and his brief two minutes' speech at Gettysburg, following Edward Everett's eloquent two hours' oration—(which Everett would gladly have exchanged for Lincoln's twenty lines) in which speech occurs the oft-quoted sentence where Lincoln expresses the hope that "Government of the people, for the people, by the people, may not perish from the Earth."

In 1858 was fought the political battle in Illinois which substantially determined the nature and the result of the national contest of 1860. Lincoln met Senator Douglas, the northern leader of the Democratic party, in several joint debates, where the questions at issue were discussed before the people. In these debates Douglas was compelled to disclose just how far he was willing to go in upholding slavery, while Lincoln clearly defined how far he believed he had the Constitutional right to go and intended to go in opposing slavery. The debates were published throughout the land; and the final outcome was that the Republicans of the nation were attracted to the support of Lincoln, chose him for their champion, and accepted his definitions of their creed; while the South withdrew from Douglas, dividing asunder the Democratic party and making certain the election of Lincoln to the Presidency.

The processes of education are various. Let a man be concerned in public affairs for some thirty years in a place where all institutions are fixed and deeply-rooted; where there is but little of the exciting stir and conflict of humanity; where life runs quietly on in well-worn ruts: where all questions that arise are determined by routine and established custom; where for a century one year is but the twin of every other year;—and he might, by diligent study of the records of the great

conflicts of the past, so master the problems that concern mankind as to become a profoundly educated statesman. But let him be placed in a new, lusty, young State like that of Illinois, not yet fully reclaimed from the grasp of the red man, and all its institutions yet to receive definite form; where the stir and the rush and the whirl of life are almost unprecedented; where every year leaves far behind the landmarks of the former year; where all questions are open questions, and nothing so fixed that it may not, upon discussion, be unfixed; where all the problems in religion, politics, education and jurisprudence come up anew for decision, and are to be decided with regard to principle rather than to precedent; where the elements that make up society are many and diverse and actively antagonistic;—let a man have, like Lincoln, thirty years of such experience, taking large part in moulding the growing institutions of the State, and (if he have the capacity to learn in such a school) it is he, disciplined by the actual conflict of life, rather than the one profoundly versed in the history and philosophy of human conflicts, who is best fitted to encounter any great and sudden crisis in human affairs where the problems for solution are alike new and difficult.

I have wholly failed in my purpose, if it has not been shown that Lincoln entered upon the Presidency an educated man, fairly trained and disciplined for his work; that whatever of "force and brilliancy" he manifested in that high office he had "acquired beforehand;" and that it is not quite an adequate description of such a man to designate him as an "ex-mechanic," or as an "untried lawyer of a western village." True, there was a time when he had just entered upon the practice of law,—there was a time when he toil-

ed with his hands for a livelihood,—and there was a time when he was a boy; but it was not as ex-boy, or ex-mechanic, or ex-village lawyer, that the American people, in the very crisis of their great political struggle, seeking for the ablest and trustiest leadership, fixed their choice upon Abraham Lincoln.

PERSONAL TRAITS.

It was not alone his political wisdom and ability that won for him, and enabled him to retain, the confidence of the people. The whole man was attractive to them.

Lincoln was honest and sincere. Truth was the basis of his character, as it must be the basis of any character that shall endure. He was wholly free from any taint of Machiavel's maxim, that "the credit and reputation of virtue are a help to man, but virtue itself a hindrance." His professed creed was his real creed. Long before he was named for the Presidency the people of Illinois had knighted him, giving him the title "Honest." It is frequently said,—

"An honest man's the noblest work of God," and it is generally believed that an honest lawyer is the rarest; yet it was as lawyer, no less than as politician, that the appellation was bestowed. His colleagues at the bar used to say of him that he was "perversely honest." Diplomats,—accustomed to intricate, labyrinthine policies and "wheels within wheels,"—were at a loss what to make of such a man. His simple straightforward utterances were, to them, insoluble enigmas. One who was finding himself continually baffled by this transparent honesty insisted that Lincoln was the most cunning man in America. No, it was not cunning; it was "the brave old wisdom of sincerity." He was one of those

"Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill."

The people's trust in Lincoln's honesty was never shaken. That anchor held, when so many other anchors seemed to give way.

Lincoln was kind. His heart was tender as a woman's. He was habitually considerate of others, and was gentle alike in word and deed. Throughout his life-long struggle in opposition to slavery, with all his earnestness and zeal he had no unkind taunts, no bitter invective, no vituperation to pour forth upon the people of the South. "Sweetness and light" characterized his speech. Yet he was not wanting in feelings of deep indignation; and those feelings were never more fully aroused than by the recital of the privations endured by Union soldiers in Andersonville prison. Still, when he was vehemently urged to retaliate, he refused, saying,—"I can never, never starve men like that."

Lincoln was unassuming before men and humble before God. He did not depreciate himself, but he failed not to appreciate others. He was free from self-conceit. He held his mind open to suggestions from every side. He received all frankly, listened to all kindly and patiently, and judged all candidly. He was reverent and humble before Almighty God. He recognized a power, higher than his own, fashioning events beyond man's control. He acknowledged that "Man proposes, but God disposes." "I confess plainly," he said, "that I have not controlled events, but events have controlled me." He had nothing of the imperious spirit of Napoleon who, in the midst of his career, vaunted,—"I propose and I dispose, also."

Lincoln was firm. He held to his creed, firmly. For the thirty years of his public and political life in Illinois

he maintained, without wavering, his fundamental political principles, that slavery was a wrong and that there was a constitutional method which could be adopted and should be adopted to deal with it as a wrong. His was not a vacillating mind. In doubtful matters he deliberated carefully and long, sadly trying the patience of impatient men, before (to use his own phrase) he "put his foot down;" but when once it was put down it seemed almost immovable. It was, indeed put down so quietly, with such entire absence of demonstration and bluster, that few could realize how firmly Lincoln held it there until they sought to move it. In a remarkable degree he exemplified the saying of Demosthenes: "The beginning of virtue is consultation and deliberation; the perfection of it, constancy." His firmness was nowhere more conspicuous than in retaining and sustaining his military and civil officers against the fierce clamour of detraction which would arise in the tempestuous hours of peril and disaster. Had his firmness not been of the highest quality, early in the war Grant and Sherman would have been dismissed from the army, and during the war Seward and Chase discarded from the Cabinet. The combination of this firmness with Lincoln's other qualities has been forcibly stated by Motley: "So much firmness with such gentleness of heart, so much logical acuteness with such almost child-like simplicity and ingenuousness of nature, so much candor to weigh the wisdom of others with so much tenacity to retain his own judgment, were rarely before united in one individual."

Lincoln was a true gentleman. Some of the external signs of what is gentlemanly will differ with differing countries and ages; and it happened that in the large, free, new, developing West

the conventional usages of society differed in very many minor particulars from those of the more fully developed East. When Lincoln assumed the Presidency, it was discovered that his manners had a Western flavor; and dilettanti critics were horrified to find that the new President was not careful to conform, in all particulars, to "that mere system of etiquette and conventionalism in which small minds find their very being;"* and he was set down as "a raw, rough, unsophisticated" boor. Yet, in all the essential qualities, and in all the higher and finer qualities which constitute the true gentleman, Lincoln was the peer of any man he ever met. One pregnant fact, in illustration, will suffice: Frederick Douglass says that Lincoln is the only man of note in America, with whom he has had an hour's conversation, who did not in the course of the hour, somehow, in some way or other, remind him that he was of a different race.

HIS HUMOUR.

Prominence must be given to Lincoln's humour; for it was one of the most prominent, and I think not the least valuable, of his characteristic traits. Humour enters into the make-up of the complete man. It is one of the elements of human greatness; without it, something would be lacking. So it was justly held by Socrates that the great poet should be great in comedy no less than in tragedy, —that his greatness should comprehend all sides of human life. It is only your men of inferior grade who deride humour. Such were the French literary critics in the Voltairian age, who regarded Shakespeare simply as a "buffoon"; and such were the small politicians who made that same word

"buffoon" express their entire comprehension of Lincoln. That humour is not incompatible with loftiness of position and greatness of character even so cynical a critic as Horace Walpole would allow. "A careless song," he says, "with a little nonsense in it, now and then, does not misbecome a monarch." And the historian, Motley, speaking of the apparent gaiety of William the Silent in the darkest hours of his country's trials, says that those who censured this gaiety were "dullards who could not comprehend its philosophy."

Perhaps we are all disposed to underestimate the value of Lincoln's exuberant humour; to regard it rather as a defect,—as something detracting from his greatness,—as, in some way, lowering him from the sublime height which, we imagine, every great man should occupy. To conceive of a man as great, it seems necessary to keep him, somehow, at a great distance. Where and tiquity intervenes, distance in time aids our conception, and the humour of the great man does not belittle him in our estimation,—as instance Socrates, Luther, Sir Thomas More, William of Orange, Franklin. But, ordinarily, humour brings a man close to us, and, to some extent, tends to destroy the sense of greatness. He that laughs with me puts himself, in a manner, on my own level. "No man is a hero to his valet,"—that is, to one who knows him in undress; and humour is the undress of the mind. Undoubtedly this humour of Lincoln did preclude such feelings of profound veneration as would arise from a sense of awful greatness and solitary grandeur; but what he lost in veneration he more than gained in love. This love was of value inestimable. The whole question of success or failure in the great contest depended upon whether or no Lincoln

*Frederick Robertson.

could keep the people with him, and all along, the people, finding that Lincoln did not hold himself aloof from them, steadfastly clung to him, even when the politicians were ready to desert him. I cannot doubt that his gentle, quiet, wise humour had no small influence in keeping him on good terms with the people.

Humour is both spear and shield. With Lincoln, before he became President, it was as the spear of Ithuriel, unmasking subtle fallacies at a touch. After he became President it was his shield. He interposed it for protection against the intermeddlers who felt a call to dictate the manner of governing the nation. Not even Cromwell was so worried with the dictatorial advisings of those Puritan Ironsides of his, who proved so troublesome to his enemies in war and to himself in peace. Lincoln was not laggard in acknowledging the immense importance of the fact that the churches of the North were with him, that the religious conscience of the people was sustaining the Union armies; yet, at times, he must have felt that he was paying a large price for this support, in enduring so many delegations of ministers—coming singly, or in pairs, or by the dozen—who thought they had a divine commission to direct the President's course. To one group of ministers, especially positive in announcing just what measures God wished him to adopt, Lincoln, gravely meditating upon their message, answered slowly:—"Well, gentlemen, it is not often that one is favoured with a *delegation direct from the Almighty*." His Emancipation Proclamation was delayed, wisely and necessarily, until the right moment came. To wait, to bide the time of its coming, was a difficult task; for few possess the gift of patience,—few can realize that

"To wait may be to do :
Waiting won a Waterloo !"

A minister, one of his most impatient friends, was urging Lincoln to immediate action. "Why not issue it at once?" "I have no right, until it becomes a military necessity; and it isn't that yet." Why must you wait? Just call it a military necessity, and that will do." "Oh, said Lincoln, "that would do, would it? Please excuse a very simple question; but,—How many legs would a sheep have, calling the tail one?" "Why, five, of course." "Oh, no; it would only have four. *Calling* the tail a leg does not make it a leg." The minister took his leave to ponder over his new lesson in political ethics. He was not the only one who left Lincoln's presence all the wiser for an interview with him. A large delegation from some clerical body visited him to give him cheer and sympathy; and one of the ministers said,—"Well, we have one great blessing; I believe that the Lord is on our side." "Yes," replied Lincoln, "but there is something more important than that." "I beg your pardon, Mr. President; but perhaps you misunderstood my remark. I said that I believe the Lord is on *our* side." "Yes; but that is not the most important thing." "Why, what can be more important than that?" "That *we* should be on the *Lord's* side."

To Lincoln, personally, humour was of incalculable worth, because of its medicinal, restful, recuperative properties. The four wearisome years dragged heavily on; the weight of care and of woe resting upon him could hardly be upborne; there were times when, as disasters came thick and fast, sleep fled from him, and he would exclaim,—
"If there is a man out of hell that suffers more than I do, I pity him." Without such aid as humour gave him—restoring elasticity to the mind, re-

lieving now and then the tension of the nerves, giving occasional brief respite to well-nigh exhausted powers,—I do not see how Lincoln could have endured it all. Does this seem at all strange? Think of Luther, at the time of the Augsburg Conference—the critical hour of the Reformation when Luther felt that everything was at stake—busying himself with writing his elaborate account of a Congress of rooks, and adding—“This is a mere pleasantry; but it is a serious one and *necessary to me* in order to repulse the thoughts which overwhelm me.”*

LINCOLN AS PRESIDENT.

It was well that Lincoln was a full-grown man in the prime of his strength, when he entered upon his great office. He had need of all his resources. Everything was unsettled. The nation was drifting from its moorings. It was chaos come again. His Presidential oath—“to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution”—had given him a place whereon to stand, and there he stood firmly and calmly amid all the confusion; and when it was ascertained that threats would not intimidate him, that rebellion in word and in formal resolution would not move him, then rebellion in act followed, and Fort Sumter took its place in history.

*To me there is indescribable pathos in that touching scene in the Tower, between Sir Thomas More and his beloved daughter, Margaret. Each was to the other more than fondest lover, and each was overwhelmed with sorrow in thinking of the other's sorrow. At last, after a long and cruel separation the doomed man was permitted to have a brief interview with his daughter. When she entered his cell, they embraced and wept in silence, neither being capable of uttering a word. At length, as they gazed fondly one upon the other, Sir Thomas Moore said—“Why, Meg, you are getting freckled;” and Margaret adds in her Journal—“Soe that made us bothe laugh.” What pathos is in the laughter which is but the repressed bubblings of tears of woe!

The task then devolving upon Lincoln was to put down that rebellion. As President he had his skilful military officers, trained by the government,—but he found that many of them were disregarding the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, and were preparing to give him battle; he had a navy,—but found national ships of war were being converted into rebel rams; he had forts and arsenals,—but found that these were supplying strongholds and weapons to destroy the nation they were intended to defend. For a time, as Lincoln said, it was “impossible to tell whom to trust.” At last, when all had taken position, it became manifest who were for the government, who were against the government, and who were endeavouring to be or were pretending to be neutral.

The North had greatly the preponderance in men and resources, and had it been united the contest would not have so wearily dragged its slow length along, but would have verified the prediction of a famous General who promised to make the war “short, sharp, and decisive.” Indeed, there would have been no war. The Southerners never intended to pit their strength against the full strength of the North. Of course, they expected to do their part, (and they did it!) but they relied not a little upon foreign aid, of which they professed to be very confident, and very much upon divisions in the North, of which they were altogether certain.

The possible complications with foreign powers was a danger to be avoided with delicate tact and care, but it was the actual divisions in the North which made the task of Lincoln so extremely difficult. His supporters in the election were prepared to support him in the war, though many of them were anxious rather to destroy slavery

than to preserve the nation. A considerable number who voted against Lincoln were willing to sustain him as President provided the war for the Union was not made the pretext for a war against slavery. The majority of those who voted against Lincoln, in the North, were for peace at almost any price, and they persistently opposed all measures looking to the vigorous prosecution of the war; while some were seeking every opportunity to give positive aid to the South. This, then, was what Lincoln had to do: while steering clear of foreign complications, to so conduct the war as to unite in efficient combat against the South all the loyal elements of the North, and to keep the disloyal elements quiescent. How formidable these disloyal elements were may be inferred from the fact that at one time they took possession of New York City, by mob violence, and held it for three days in defiance of the Government.*

In working out his task, if Lincoln could only have had the best conceivable men! But he must needs take such as he could find, who, often, were not such as he could wish. Love of country, sense of right, loyalty to duty, were not wanting; yet, with these, not seldom was there a large admixture of self-conceit, or overweening pride, or

*In the third year of the war, the opposition candidate for Governor in the state of Ohio was Vallandigham, a bitter opponent of the war, and the most pronounced and obnoxious of the northern sympathizers with the South. Brough defeated him by 100,000 majority. I vividly recall the exultant jubiliations of the army in front of the southern lines at Chattanooga when the result was made known; but I also remember that I was not so much impressed by the great majority Governor Brough had received, as with the significant and startling fact that 150,000 citizens in that one Northern State had, by voting for Vallandigham, declared, in effect, their sympathy with the South, and their wish to give up the contest.

personal ambitions, jealousies and rivalries, or intemperate zeal, or rash indiscretion, or arrogant presumption. He took what seemed the best, and, with all their weaknesses and foibles, made the best possible use of them, so long as they were usable at all. The self-conceit seemed universal. Perhaps it was his own lack of it that fostered it in others. So quiet was he, so unpretending, displaying none of those "feathers of ostentation" without which Bacon says "the fame of learning is slow," with no tone of imperiousness in his words, and with no air of condescension in listening to the words of others, the officials at Washington were self-deceived in the President. Indeed, we are all the pitiful slaves of appearances. If the great man come not duly labelled, or appear not in livery, how are we to know him? True, they had Lincoln's speeches—of which the Leeds *Mercury* has well said that they "are a photograph of his character,.....overflowing with great thoughts and strong in manly sense;" but they were too enamoured with the beauties of their own speeches to realize the calm strength and rare sagacity of the man who had uttered Lincoln's, and too much absorbed in the contemplation of their own greatness to comprehend his. Evidently it was a time that called for great men. In such a crisis, at such a momentous epoch, it were a thousand pities if some one did not rise to the height of the occasion; and since this undemonstrative man seemed to be doing nothing startling and astounding, each one of dozens of Generals and Statesmen began to feel that he was the man for the hour. General Fremont, in military command at the West, undertook the role of political dictator, and General McClellan, in military command at the East, that of political censor, tutor and guide to the

President, while every one of his Cabinet Ministers was quite willing to relieve Lincoln of the helm. In his own quiet way he gave them to understand their relative positions. He received and he sought, counsel and advice from all; he heard attentively and considered carefully; yet he had to say,—“In the end the decision must rest with me;” and they all learned in time, somewhat slowly and reluctantly, that the decision did rest with him.

I feel how hopeless is the task to condense into a few sentences the substance of a volume—to depict the embarrassments, perplexities, trials, disappointments, misunderstandings, and the ten thousand difficulties which continually beset the President, amid a hubbub of clamorous and distracting voices, censorious, distrustful, and dictatorial. However, through it all Lincoln kept his head; and he kept his faith in God and his faith in man, though his faith in men often failed. The great difficulty lay in the great diversity of sentiment among those who supported his government. Many of one class were hot, rash and impatient; many others, of another class, lukewarm, timid and hesitating. Lincoln could dispense with neither and he displeased both. “At first he was so slow that he tired out all those who see no evidence of progress but in blowing up the engine; then he was so fast, that he took the breath away from those who think there is no safety while there is a spark of fire under the boilers.”* Few, now, will withhold the meed of praise from that calm, patient, wondrously wise man, the true hearted, strong-hearted, clear-headed, cool-headed man, the man “of iron brow and heart of gold,” who piloted the ship of

state safely through its dangers, standing always firm and unmoved, uncomplainingly receiving success and distrust and censure where he had looked for sympathy and confidence and approval. We praise the pilot, now; but how greatly was he misjudged at the time. The desired haven was evident to all; and to many the one wise and essential thing was to keep up full head of steam and push forward persistently at the highest pressure, holding a rigid course, straight and direct for the point of destination. So they thought Lincoln heedless and supine when he was but waiting for the dense fog to lift, and that he was departing from his course when he was but tacking. For it was not plain sailing. All along it was a “dim and perilous way.” All along, on every side were threatening reefs, and the channel was not easily found, and, when found, at times so shallow that again and again and again we seemed to hear the grating of the keel upon the rocks.

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION.

The great fact of the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln is, his Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln as President, in time of peace, would have had not the remotest pretence of authority for issuing it; as Commander-in-Chief, in time of war, he had authority;—that is, whenever, to secure success in war, it should become a military necessity, then it would be constitutionally lawful. So long as its effect would have been to completely divide the North, making rebellion successful and slavery perpetual, it was a military necessity *not* to issue it. The great majority of those who censured his slowness of movement acknowledge now that his delay was a wise delay, and that his cautious steps prelimin-

*Lowell, in *North American Review*, 1864.

nary to the final issuing of the Proclamation, were necessary to so effectually consolidate public sentiment in support of it, that it should not fail of its purpose. Lincoln felt it to be sublimely right, though issued as a "war measure;" and in the memorable concluding sentence of the Proclamation he places its righteousness in the forefront:

"And upon this, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

By this Proclamation, affecting 3,120,000 slaves within the lines of the rebellion, and by an Amendment to the Constitution proposed and carried by the supporters of Lincoln affecting 830,000 other slaves, America became free America, and, in consummating this sublimest event of the century, they who wrought the deed so shattered human slavery throughout the world that it must speedily fall, never more to rise and curse the Earth. The fact that, with the war, slavery in America came to an end, is patent to all; but with regard to the motives and purposes, as touching slavery, of the parties to the war, there is in many minds a very hazy and confused idea.

It is said: "In entering upon the war, Lincoln and the North did not intend, while putting down the rebellion, to put an end to slavery at the same time." True. It is also said: "Therefore Lincoln and his adherents deserve no more credit for the extinction of slavery than do Jefferson Davis and his adherents." Not true. The whole matter admits of simple statement in few words: The election of Lincoln was the provocation to the rebellion. Lincoln, and those whose votes elected him, purposed to so use the national

authority, within constitutional lines, as to limit and restrict slavery. The North believed and hoped, and the South believed and feared, that if this policy were persisted in, slavery would "in the run of time" cease to be. In electing Lincoln the Republican party did not expect and did not intend the immediate extinction of slavery; it did expect and did intend the ultimate extinction of slavery. The South having lost the political battle, which was fought solely upon the slavery question, then tendered the gage of war. The North could have avoided war in either one of two ways: it could have given up the Union, and parting from the South could have formed a nation wholly freed from slavery; or it could have saved the Union intact, without war, by surrendering the fruits of its political victory and withdrawing all opposition to slavery. The North would do neither; and entered upon the war with a two-fold purpose,—that the nation should continue to be a nation, and so continue that in time it might become a free nation. The election of Lincoln was the culminating point of a long contest extending over many years. The war was a continuance of that contest—being, as Lincoln phrased it, an "appeal from the ballot to the bullet." The creed of Lincoln, the representative man of the North, was none other than that of John Brown, whose creed was this: "I believe in the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence,"—the latter phrase meaning the right of every man to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." John Brown thought to realize the creed at once, violently, by a slave insurrection; Lincoln, in the course of time, by peaceable and constitutional methods. The Almighty made use of John Brown and Abraham Lincoln in accomplishing the destruc-

tion of slavery, but by a method not proposed by either. Lincoln yielded to the power higher than his own, and with trembling joy grasped the great opportunity God placed within his reach to effect in the present that which had been his great hope for the distant future. The purpose of the North, the purpose of the South, and the overruling power of God, are clearly and admirably set forth in Lincoln's second Inaugural address. I quote two or three paragraphs :—

"All knew that this interest (slavery) was some how the cause of the war. To strengthen perpetuate and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Both looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding.

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invoke His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of heaven has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes. 'Woe unto the world, because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offences, which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may soon pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, —as was said three thousand years ago, so, still, it must be said,—'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

ESTIMATE OF LINCOLN.

As there seems to have been at one time in England a strange misconception of the great war,—even Carlyle putting it aside as but "the burning of a dirty chimney,"—so there was gross misconception of the character of Lincoln, as the columns of the *Times* and of *Punch* would testify. At the close of his career he began to be more truly comprehended and it was but the expression of the thought of very many when a prominent English Newspaper said that Lincoln "will live in the hearts and minds of the whole Anglo-Saxon race as one of the noblest examples of that race's highest qualities." And when all the clouds and mists that have obscured the man, or given distorted views of him, shall have passed away, some Englishman will arise to produce a portrait of Lincoln that shall endure, and find a place not lower than that of Washington or Franklin. In fiction Dickens has cleverly sketched, in his *Elijah Pogram*, —a western politician,—the littleness that often struts and swells in pompous garb and assumes a bombastic tone. It is left to a nobler pen than that of Dickens—for does not *Rafaëlle*, rank Hogarth?—to portray, in history, the greatness that appeared in almost rustic attire, modest and unassuming, in the person of Lincoln, the western statesman.

How thoroughly English are many of the best things in his character. In steadfastness of purpose, in persistence of effort, in pluck, in standing firmly on his own legs, is he not what all Englishmen respect? In his subduedness of tone, in his freedom from all rant and bluster, in his words, that do not go beyond his matured thought, and in his deeds that do not lag behind his uttered words, does he not appeal to what is best and most characteristic in English character? The first English

poet of the century, in his poem "The Happy Warrior," has depicted the ideal Englishman. Read it; for there is not a single trait that Wordsworth has delineated which is not exemplified in Lincoln. When English critics would bestow highest praise, they are wont to quote the famous couplet wherein Sir John Denham likens the noblest character to the river Thames :

"Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;

Strong, without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

To whom can these lines be applied with more complete appropriateness than to Lincoln? Punch was not in his best mood when he devoted himself to the caricature of such a man; but how grandly did Punch strive to make amends when, along with all that is noblest and worthiest of earth, he took his place among the mourners over the murdered body of this great and good man :

"Beside this corpse, that bears for winding-sheet

The Stars and Stripes he lived to rear anew,

Between the mourners at his head and feet,

Say, scurril-jester, is there room for YOU?

"Yes, he had lived to shame me from my sneer,

To lame my pencil and confute my pen;

To make me own this hind of princes peer,

This rail-splitter a true-born king of men.

"My shallow judgment I had learned to rue,

Noting how to occasion's height he rose;

How his quaint wit made home-truth seem more true;

How, iron-like, his temper grew by blows;

"How humble, yet how hopeful, he could be;

How in good fortune and in ill the same;

Not bitter in success, nor boastful he,

Thirsty for gold, nor feverish for fame.

"He went about his work—such work as few

Ever had laid on head and heart and hand—

As one who knows, where there's a task to do,

Man's honest will must Heaven's good grace command."

* * * * *

But for some rare, peerless characteristics in Lincoln we seek his exem-

plar not in England nor in America; only in Galilee. There alone do we find—and we find in ineffable perfection—a prototype of patient endurance of contumely without retaliation, and an all-pervading charity that excludes every feeling of revenge. For such gentleness with such power, for such forbearance with such provocation, for such forgiveness for such wrongs, we shall not rest in our search through history until we have gone back some Eighteen Hundred years. The spirit of the man breathes in those golden words which form the fitting close of the remarkable utterances in his second Inaugural:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

In America the common people and the soldiery loved Lincoln with a love unparalled in history. At Washington there was no lack of censure and adverse criticism, but with the people at large there was unshaken confidence. They found in Lincoln all that was best in themselves, and they trusted him who trusted them. And when he was stricken down, the blow fell upon millions of households, and the people mourned, each one as though he had lost his dearest, best beloved, most intimate friend. The world had learned to love Lincoln, too; and messages came across the Atlantic from many an English home and many an Alpine cottage, that the loss of America was felt to be the loss of mankind. The name and the fame of Lincoln is not for one country alone; for "he leaves," says

M. Prevost Paradol, the eminent French journalist, "to every one in the world to whom liberty and justice are dear, a great remembrance and a pure example." Still his countrymen claim that they find in him something peculiarly American; and this is nowhere so worthily expressed as in the noble lines of James Russell Lowell—who, I think, will sometime be recognized as first of American poets :

"Forgive me if from present things I turn
 To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
 And hang my wreath on his world-honoured urn.
 Nature, they say, doth dote,
 And cannot make a man
 Save on some worn-out plan,
 Repeating us by rote :
 For him her Old World moulds aside she threw,
 And choosing sweet clay from the breast
 Of the unexhausted West
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
 Wise, steadfast in the strength of God and true.
 How beautiful to see
 Once more a shepherd of mankind, indeed,
 Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead ;
 One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
 Not lured by any cheat of birth,
 But by his clear-grained human worth.
 They could not choose but trust
 In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
 And supple-tempered will
 That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.
 * * * * * * *

Great captains, with their guns and drums,
 Disturb our judgment for the hour ;
 But at last silence comes :
 These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
 Our children shall behold his fame,
 The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
 Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
 New birth of our new soil, the first American."













